
OVERSTONE PARK SCHOOL

Critical Incident Policy



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Overstone Park, Northampton, NN6 0DT

Critical Incident Policy

Date	Review Date	Coordinator
September 2026	September 2027	Mrs M Brown - Principal Mrs D York – Deputy Head & DSL Mrs L Vippond - Administrator

We consider that a critical incident is an event that is potentially traumatic, and affects a large part, or the whole of our school, rather than just one or two individuals.

Such events are likely to cause many people in our community distress and may threaten to overwhelm our capacity to cope.

This policy might also be useful to support our school's response to serious incidents that affect just one or a few pupils by using the guidance to shape our response to the specific pupil/s affected.

This policy is based on five evidence-informed principles that will help us respond to a critical incident in ways that reduce the impact of trauma and create the best environment for recovery. These principles help children and young people to feel:

- Safe
- Calm
- Connected
- In control
- Hopeful

Purpose and benefits of policy

The purpose of this policy is to help the Senior Leadership, the governing body (or similar board) and whole staff team respond to critical incidents in a way that will best support the psychological recovery of the pupils and staff and enable the school to function effectively.

Using this policy will benefit us by guiding us to:

- feel confident that the responses we make are underpinned by the best available evidence.
- support our staff, children and young people following a critical incident.
- facilitate psychological recovery and reduce the potential traumatic impact of the event.
- empower our educational community to function effectively.
- help identify children and young people who might be more at risk to the potential impact from the trauma of the event.

Links to other key policies

This policy will be implemented alongside other relevant school policies including Pastoral Care, Anti racism, Safeguarding, Internet/Mobile Use, Health & Safety, Media and SEND Policies.

Key staff roles in the event of a critical incident

In the event of a critical incident the Critical Incidents Management Team (CIMT) will be formed to undertake the following roles:

Role	Name
Overall Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) lead	Mrs Marion Brown, Principal
Site safety/first aid co-ordinator – including communication with emergency services	Mrs Dawn York, Deputy head
Communication with and support for children and young people	Mrs S Salas, Lead behaviour mentor
Liaison with external agencies/Media liaison	Mrs Vanessa Price, Director
Communication with parents/carers	Mrs Kelly Gorton, Lead Administrator
CIMT support (person responsible for supporting the above team)	Mr Benjamin Brown, Director
Security and site coordinator	Mr Williams and Mr C Warner

Adaptations to roles might be required depending on the nature of the event and who is involved. Some staff might also take on multiple roles where appropriate. Staff will be able to decline any task that they currently feel unable to do.

Preparation

In our preparation for a potential critical incident, in order to help our school community to feel safe, calm, connected, in control and hopeful we will...

- Use a Senior Leadership meeting to review our current policy.
- Deliver an INSET session to all staff and governors (UKTC INSET resource).
- Update our critical incidents policy in light of discussion from the INSET session and drawing on evidence-based principles (UKTC Critical Incidents guidance).
- Prepare our CIMT (Critical Incidents Management team) identifying staff who are best placed to undertake key roles.

Immediate response

In the first hours and days that follow a critical incident to help our school community to feel safe, calm, connected, in control.

- Contact and use emergency service support as appropriate.
- Ensure that all staff, children and young people are accounted for and that the whereabouts of all people involved is known. If people are missing this will need to be acted upon.
- Speak to staff, children and young people directly involved in the incident to consider immediate safety needs and any support required.
- Ensure our children, young people and staff needs for water, food and rest are accommodated.
- Seek to establish as far as possible the facts of the incident – who, what, where, when?
- Decide whether the event qualifies as a critical incident.
- Meet with senior leaders where possible and agree which members of staff will form the Critical Incidents Management Team.
- Speak to involved professionals such as the police, medical professionals and social care to gather information and to agree any restrictions on what can be said and to whom.

- Provide staff all with an initial outline of the incident and outline any first steps to be taken at this stage.
- Make contact with the families of those staff and pupils directly involved to ensure that they are aware of the incident and of what has happened to their family member including where they are.
- Make contact with key stakeholders: our chair of governors, the local authority to inform them of the incident and to seek the support of specialist staff such as the Educational Psychology Service or media officer if appropriate.
- Inform the rest of our school community, providing accurate and honest information. Consider sharing information in small groups if possible, and by staff who feel confident doing this. (See UKTC Critical Incidents guidance immediate response for details on giving information).
- Inform other professionals who work regularly in our setting but who might be missed as part of general staff communications such as peripatetic specialists.
- Make plans to deal with the enquiries of pupils, families and the press. This can be done in collaboration with a media officer.
- Decide how our school can operate or whether it will be better to close it for a short while. If being kept open will teaching be suspended temporarily and what alternative arrangements will be put in place?
- Consider the practical implications of the incident on the running of our school, for example covering the classes of members of staff who are not able to be there.
- If the critical incident is on a large scale, triggering the involvement of multiple services, decide if a Team Around the School is required to help co-ordinate multiple agency involvement. If so, establish who this will include and schedule initial meetings.
- Begin to identify those in our community (staff, children and young people) who may be more vulnerable and need closer attention and support (see UKTC Critical Incidents guidance medium term response and supplement 4 for further information).
- Restore our familiar routines and structure within the school day as far as is possible and helpful.
- Staff to explain and normalise distress, encouraging children and young people to use what helps them feel calmer.
- Share and teach strategies to help regulate emotions (UKTC Critical Incidents lesson plans 3-6 years, 7-11 years and 12+ years).
- Facilitate connection between peers, staff and home.
- Work to include our school community in decision making to give them some influence and control where possible.
- Provide parents and carers with information about how to best help their child.
- Keep a sense of hope visible, explicitly affirming how we will get through this together.

Medium term response

In the first weeks that follow a critical incident in order to help our school community to feel safe, calm, connected, in control and hopeful we will....

- Update staff, pupils, parents and carers as new information and more details become available. Build on news about how services are working to keep the community safe.
- Present information in printed form for pupils who would benefit from this, using simple text or their preferred symbols.

- Where appropriate, develop partnerships with external professionals that hold expertise in the event we have experienced.
- Closely monitor those in our community that may need targeted support including personalised care plans as they are at risk of developing more persistent problems (see UKTC Critical Incidents guidance medium term response and supplement 4 about those who might be more vulnerable).
- Monitor staff wellbeing, encouraging personal and collective responsibility to seek help both internally but also ensure information about external services is readily available.
- Facilitate further opportunities for peer and community support in planning ways to help and/or memorialise those impacted.
- Make plans that involve discussion about the future.

Ongoing response

In the months and years that follow a critical incident, to help our school community to feel safe, calm, connected, in control and hopeful we will....

- Seek to develop a new normal, embedding routines and structures that have been helpful.
- Make referrals to services for pupils that might need specialist support, involving them and their parents/carers in the decision making.
- Acknowledge key dates and triggers that might be more difficult for some in our community and put in measures to identify and support those most affected.
- Collectively plan how we will mark the first anniversary using this as an occasion to remember what happened, name those who died, were bereaved or affected by the event and also to acknowledge how we have all coped.
- Consider how we might develop an ongoing legacy of the incident that helps us show the value of those in our school.
- Seek feedback from our school community about how we responded to this critical incident to identify lessons learned.
- Record and share these lessons, reviewing our policy considering them.
- Highlight and celebrate and explicitly acknowledge how far we have come.

How & when dissemination and review

This policy was signed by the Principal and finalised on 02/08/24 and shared with staff in meeting/briefing. It will be stored in our (shared drive?) and accessible to all staff as needed.

HT/SLT have ownership to review and update it at least every year.

Who else can help?

When seeking outside support, we will draw from those who share our understanding about what can help and empower us to embed the guiding principles. This might also include developing a Team around the School.

Contact details for key services/organisations we may draw on include:

- Local authority critical incidents team
- Educational Psychology team
- Child Death Lead for local authority

- Social care
- Police/other emergency services as appropriate
- LEA media spokesperson as appropriate.

Other organisations who hold specific expertise relevant to the critical incident will be identified e.g., following a suicide.

Where our children/young people need specialist support for enduring difficulties we will make referrals to:

- General Practitioners (GPs)
- Educational Psychology Service (EPS)
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
- Mental Health Support Teams (MHST)
- Charities (such as counselling and child bereavement services)
- School counsellor
- Family hubs
- Youth services and youth hubs

Links to other resources/websites

UKTC Critical Incidents resources

- UKTC Critical incidents guidance
- UKTC Critical incidents INSET session for staff consider and prepare their educational community response
- UKTC Critical incidents lesson plans to help children regulate emotions (ages 3-6 years, 7-11 years and 12+ years)
- UKTC Working with parents and carers resources
- UKTC Traumatic bereavement resources including an animation and a Schools and colleges guide. These resources help those working with children and young people recognise when trauma might be impacting the ability to grieve. Includes information sheets for young people and for parents/carers.

See UKTC Critical Incidents guidance supplement 6 for further resources/websites and organisations.

Principal: Mrs M Brown

Date: September 2026